

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An online shopping method, comprising:

5 previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;

upon receiving an article search by a user, generating article picture arrangement data in which article pictures similar to each other in the features are disposed at close positions, as search results of the article data;

10 sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal so that each article picture data is successively sent in accordance with the data sending rank; and

15 at the user terminal, displaying each article picture data at each arrangement position on a screen of search results in a receiving order,

thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the arrangement position.

2. An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an

20 article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.

25 3. An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider.

4. An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and

30 the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the notified items.

5. An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and  
the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance  
5 with the analyzed items.
6. An online shopping method according to claim 2, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the  
10 presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.
7. An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein the data sending rank is determined by an article provider.  
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8. An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a service user previously selects items to be considered in purchasing an article and notifies a service provider of the selection, and  
the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance  
20 with the notified items.
9. An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a service provider previously analyzes items considered by a service user based on a past search history and a past purchase history of the service user, and  
25 the service provider determines the data sending rank in accordance with the analyzed items.
10. An online shopping method according to claim 1, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.  
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11. An online shopping method for allowing a user to search for an intended article from a number of articles and disposing an article picture of each article on a display of a user terminal so as to present it to a user as search results, comprising:
- 5           in a case where there is an article whose article picture cannot be prepared by an article provider, allowing the article provider to rent an article picture of the article or a similar article prepared by another article provider; and
- 10           paying a license fee to an entity having a right to the rented article picture.
12. An online shopping method according to claim 11, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.
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13. An online shopping method for allowing a user to search for an intended article from a number of articles and disposing an article picture of each article on a display of a user terminal so as to present it to a user as search results, comprising:
- 20           preparing a representative article picture representing articles belonging to an article group; and
- 25           in a case where there is an article whose article picture cannot be provided by an article provider, allowing the article provider to use the representative article picture as an article picture of the article.
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14. An online shopping method according to claim 13, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to

access selling information of the article.

15. An online shopping method for allowing a user to search for an intended article from a number of articles and disposing an article picture of each article on a display of a user terminal so as to present it to a user as search results, comprising:
  - 5 preparing a representative article picture representing articles belonging to an article group;
  - 10 using the representative article picture as a representative of the articles belonging to the article group, and disposing the representative article picture on a display of a user terminal so as to present it to the user; and
  - 15 allowing the articles belonging to the article group to be displayed by the use of a pull-down menu of the representative article picture.
- 20 16. An online shopping method according to claim 15, wherein a screen of article search results is presented to an article provider, and the article provider specifies a picture of an article which the article provider provides on the presented screen of article search results, thereby making it possible to access selling information of the article.
- 25 17. An online shopping system for a user to search for and purchase an intended article from a number of articles,
  - a service providing system comprising:
    - an article data generating part for previously generating/preparing article data in which features of the article and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;
    - an article database for storing the article data;
    - 20 a search processing part for searching the article database upon receiving an article search by a user;
    - 30 an article picture arrangement data generating part for receiving search results of the search processing part and generating

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article picture arrangement data in which article pictures similar to each other in the features are disposed at close positions; and

a data sending control part for sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal so that each article picture data is arranged and sent in accordance with the data sending rank information,

a user terminal comprising a display control part for displaying each article picture data at each arrangement position on a screen of search results in a receiving order,

wherein an article picture with a higher data sending rank is displayed earlier at an arrangement position at the user terminal.

18. An online shopping method according to claim 17, wherein the features of the article are any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.

19. A program for realizing an online shopping system for a user to search for and purchase an intended article from a number of articles, the program comprising:

previously generating/preparing article data in which features of an article and a data sending rank are related to each article picture as additional information;

25       upon receiving an article search by a user, generating article picture arrangement data in which article pictures similar to each other in the features are disposed at close positions, as search results of the article data;

sending the article picture arrangement data to a user terminal so that each article picture data is successively sent in accordance with the data sending rank; and

at the user terminal, displaying each article picture data at each arrangement position on a screen of search results in a receiving order,

thereby displaying an article picture with a higher data sending rank earlier at the arrangement position.

20. A program according to claim 19, wherein the features of the article are  
5 any one selected from the group consisting of features of an article picture of the article, a keyword representing the features of the article, and article classification information regarding classification of the article in accordance with the features thereof, or a combination thereof.